

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss facts and fiction. Recently, FOX News reporter Peter Doocy asked White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki about a Biden administration official's claim that Republicans have defunded the police by not voting to pass Biden's wasteful \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill. Ms. Psaki doubled down on the idea that it is Republicans and not Democrats who want to defund the police.

When a White House Press Secretary gives a press briefing, you expect some spin. You expect some verbal bobbing and weaving if the topic is unflattering to the administration. But when Jen Psaki tried to blame Republicans for defunding the police, it wasn't spin. It was horse manure. It was gaslighting.

For over a year, Democrats and left-wing activists have been calling over and over and over again to defund the police. And many Democrat-led city councils and Democrat mayors have done so, cutting and even slashing police budgets. As a result of those reckless policies, we are seeing a deeply concerning wave of violent crime in American cities across the country.

The chief White House spokesperson blaming Republicans for defunding the police is like an arsonist showing up at the fire and blaming the firemen. It is like the Chinese Communist Party blaming America for the Wuhan virus. It is like OJ saying he is going to help find the real killer. It is absurd. It is ridiculous. And Democrats know it.

Let's look at the facts. Democrats have called explicitly to defund the police for over a year and have been successful in doing it. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, a Democrat, last summer pledged to cut the NYPD budget by \$1 billion, and then he did so. New York City passed a budget that did indeed cut \$1 billion from the police department.

Just a couple of months ago, de Blasio was forced to backtrack. He realized what a terrible decision it had been because now he is working to reverse it.

AOC, the darling of the extreme left-wing, has said: "Defunding [the] police means defunding [the] police" and "The fight to defund [the police] continues." There is not a lot of ambiguity in what AOC is saying.

And she is not alone. How about Representative RASHIDA TLAIB. She has called for "no more policing." Stop and think about that for a minute. This is an elected Democratic Member of Congress whose policy objective is no more policing. Those are her own words.

How about Representative ILHAN OMAR. She has said: "You can't really reform a department that is rotten to the root." An elected Democratic Member of Congress describing police departments as "rotten to the root." Again, those are her words.

And then there is Representative AYANNA PRESSLEY, who has introduced legislation to defund police officers in public schools. And she has said that defunding the police is about "true reparations." Well, maybe this is just a few fringe Democrats in the House of Representatives. Maybe it is not a broader policy of the Democratic Party.

What about Joe Biden? Uncle Joe can't possibly support defunding the police, right? Well, if you thought so, you would be wrong because Joe Biden nominated two of the leading advocates of abolishing the police—Vanita Gupta and Kristen Clarke—to senior positions at the U.S. Department of Justice. One of them is the No. 3 official at the Department of Justice. The other is the head of civil rights at the Department of Justice. Both had written, as recently as last year, explicit calls for defunding the police, and they got rewarded with helping run the Department of Justice.

But surely, you might say, even if Joe Biden gave in to the activists and nominated these folks, there are Democrats in this Chamber who would say defunding the police is too much; let's not go that far. Well, if you would say that, you would be wrong because both of those nominees, two of the leading advocates for defunding the police, were confirmed when every single Democrat in this Chamber voted to confirm them—100 percent.

The next time you see a Democrat describing themselves as moderate, reasonable, not one of those crazies saying things like "defund the police," maybe you should ask them why they voted to confirm two of the leading advocates for defunding the police to senior positions at the Department of Justice.

Democrat-led city councils all over the country are following the same game plan, and they have voted over and over and over again to defund the police. Last year, the Los Angeles City Council cut the police budget by \$150 million. Portland cut \$15 million from its police budget. Minneapolis cut \$8 million from its police budget. Seattle cut its police budget by 18 percent.

Now, what do these city have in common? They are run by Democrats. It is Democratic politicians who are slashing police budgets. And what have the results been? Well, sadly, these Democrat-led cities are reaping what they sowed. Crime rates are skyrocketing. The New York Times—hardly a right-wing outfit—the New York Times has reported that homicides in Los Angeles increased 36 percent, that homicides have increased in Portland more than 82 percent, and that homicides in Minneapolis increased nearly 72 percent last year. By all appearances, these homicide spikes will continue throughout this year.

Just a few weeks ago, Democrats demonstrated that they couldn't learn from the tragic failure of other cities that had slashed the police and seen

homicides skyrocket. What did they do in Oakland, CA? The city council voted to cut over \$18 million from the police department, and Oakland has already seen a 90-percent increase in homicides over last year.

The New York Times has also reported data showing that in 2020, homicide rates increased more than 30 percent in big cities. So far, they are increasing again this year.

According to the Guardian, some preliminary data showed that there were 4,000 more murders in 2020 than there were in 2019—4,000 men, women, and children who would be living, breathing, living their lives, raising their kids, contributing to the diverse tapestry of our Nation if it were not for the radicals slashing police budgets because of extreme ideological commitments and unleashing these crimewaves.

Now, Democrats know that the politics and the policy of defunding the police aren't working for them, which is why they are desperately trying to backtrack and blame and gaslight Republicans. Yeah, yeah, it is the Republicans who are doing this. Sure, sure, that is the ticket.

Not only did some Democrats blame calls to defund the police for close races that they lost in November and for the razor-thin Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate, they also know it isn't popular with the American people. A recent USA TODAY poll found that only 18 percent of Americans support defunding the police, and a large majority of African Americans don't support defunding the police. The same is true for Democratic voters. A large majority of Democratic voters don't support defunding the police. But in defiance of the interests of their constituents, Democrats continue to go down that road. The facts are that Democrats have repeatedly called to defund the police, and they have done so—this isn't a theory—they have done so in many cities.

Crime is rising, and radical Democratic policies have had deadly consequences. Not only have homicides risen, but there were more law enforcement officer fatalities in 2020 than there had been in 46 years. In 2020, 264 law enforcement officers tragically died in the line of duty, some from COVID-19 as a result of being first responders and others from getting shot while on duty.

After Jen Psaki blamed Republicans for defunding the police, Peter Doocy asked her to name the Republicans who said they were voting against the American Rescue Plan—the massive leftwing spending plan—that had nothing to do with the police. It was shoveling a lot of money to liberal special interests. It was giving money to State and local governments. So the White House argument was, well, some of the money to State and local governments could theoretically have gone to police, so therefore, if you don't vote for the massive trillions of dollars in spending,

you really want to defund the police. Well, unsurprisingly, Psaki couldn't name a single Republican who said they wanted to defund the police or who gave defunding the police as a reason for not voting for Biden's \$1.9 trillion, pork-filled spending bill.

The fact of the matter is, Republicans are proud to support the police, to stand with the men and women of blue, while Democrats are demonizing and vilifying the brave men and women of law enforcement.

I want to say thank you to every law enforcement officer in this country, on the Federal level and on the State and local level. Thank you for answering the call each day, putting on the uniform, wearing the badge, and risking your life to keep us safe.

This morning, all across this country, law enforcement officers woke up, they kissed their husband or wife goodbye, they kissed their kids goodbye, and they went out to defend our communities, and they did so not knowing if they would come home that night. We are proud to stand with the men and women of our police departments.

When it comes to facts and fiction, it is a cynical and calculated lie from the Biden White House that it is anybody other than Democrats who are leading the foolhardy charge to abolish and defund the police. It is dangerous, crime rates are skyrocketing, and it is an exceptionally bad idea.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The Senator from Maryland.

HELSINKI COMMISSION

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I take this time to talk about the work of the U.S. Helsinki Commission in a recent opportunity we had to participate in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I am joined on the floor by Senator WICKER, who is the Republican chair of the Helsinki Commission. The two of us have worked together in a non-partisan, bipartisan manner in regards to the work of the Helsinki Commission. I just want to spend a few minutes, and then I am going to yield the floor and allow Senator WICKER to give his comments.

The OSCE, as the chair is fully aware as a member of the Commission, represents the U.S. participation in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe—57 states, which includes all of Europe, all of the former Republics of the Soviet Union, and Canada and the United States.

The Commission works on the principle of three buckets: one for political affairs and security, another for economic and environmental progress, and the third on democracy and human rights. But it recognizes—and I think this has been the hallmark of the Helsinki Commission—that you can't have advancements on political affairs or security or economic or environmental progress unless you make progress on democracy and human rights, that they are interwoven. In the Helsinki

Commission, the OSCE is best known for its advancements for basic human rights.

So I think of the initiatives that we have had in the Helsinki Commission for dealing with trafficking in humans and the legislation that came out of that and how we led the global response to dealing with trafficking. I think about the efforts we made in regards to tolerance, dealing with anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance and how we have made progress throughout the entire OSCE region. I think about the issues we did in regards to sanctions against human rights violators so they cannot use our banking system or visit our country, the Magnitsky-type sanctions. All of that came out of the work of the Helsinki Commission.

So one of the major arms of our work is the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which is the group of parliamentarians who meet every year and have meetings throughout the year to exchange views and to carry out the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

For the last year and a half, we have been compromised because we haven't had an opportunity to meet in person, and it required us to meet by internet, and we have, but we had a unique opportunity during the last recess period to actually travel and meet with the parliamentarians. We had an OSCE Parliamentary Assembly annual meeting in Vienna. And we had a chance to do this in a hybrid manner. So we were able to travel 12-strong from the U.S. Congress to be at that meeting, and we were joined by five others here in the United States, including our Presiding Officer, to participate in the Parliamentary Assembly, and we were able to advance a lot of very important issues.

But I must tell you, we were noticed at this meeting. The U.S. presence was critically important in dealing with some very timely issues. I know that Senator WICKER will talk about this. He is one of the great leaders of the Parliamentary Assembly. He is Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly. We are very proud of the leadership position that he holds.

By the way, his election was in Vienna to be the Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly. We had multiple candidates and several elected to Vice Presidents, but Senator WICKER led the ballot with the largest number of votes, which I think speaks to his well-thought-of respect among the OSCE parliamentarians.

We wanted to make sure that this was a substantive meeting. Quite frankly, the leadership of the Parliamentary Assembly said: Let's just get in there and get it over with and not bring up anything controversial. But that is not the way we operate. We have to take up current issues.

So we took up the issue of tolerance. I was happy to sponsor a resolution that ultimately passed by unanimous vote that speaks to anti-Semitism, racism, intolerance, and the growth of

hate in the OSCE region. But we also made sure that we considered the recent elections in Belarus and how unfair those elections were and how Mr. Lukashenko has been acting in a way that is so contrary to the human rights of the people who live there, and the election results there do not reflect the will of the people.

We also had a chance to make sure we took up the issues concerning Ukraine. Once again, there was a lot of controversy on why you should bring that up during this meeting. We did. We supported that to make it clear that Russia's aggression and its occupation of Crimea and its interference in eastern Ukraine will never be recognized as legitimate by the United States or, by that matter, the Parliamentary Assembly, because we responded in all of those areas.

I am pleased to tell you that we supported Margareta Cedersfelt, who is going to be the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Sweden, and we look forward to her visit here in the United States.

RICHARD HUDSON, Representative HUDSON, will be the chair of the first committee. So we are going to have active participation in the Parliamentary Assembly.

We had the chance to visit some other countries. But if I might, I think I am going to yield the floor and give my good friend and the leader of our congressional delegation trip an opportunity to expand on some of the things we were able to do in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Maryland, who has been such a leader in the area of human rights and international recognition of the challenges that our world faces today. I do appreciate his leadership and his partnership. We have worked shoulder to shoulder on so many issues.

Yes, I proudly rise with him this afternoon to talk about a very valuable series of meetings that our 12-member delegation had in 4 countries in Europe in recent days. This was Republicans and Democrats from the House and Senate, a truly bipartisan and bicameral delegation—a very large delegation—which I think my colleague will agree made a strong statement on behalf of the United States of America and on behalf of the U.S. House and Senate about the way we view European engagement and our partnership and friendship with the 50-plus member countries of the OSCE and their Parliamentary Assembly.

We visited Vienna, Austria, for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

As Senator CARDIN mentioned, we met with great success. Yes, I was re-elected to the position of vice president, and I appreciate the support of Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate in helping me get those votes to receive another 3-year term there.